



CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

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The Honorable Stuart Symington
United States Senate
Washington, D. C.

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Dear Senator Symington:

Yesterday, in your telephone call, you asked me for a memorandum with respect to the change in the National Intelligence Estimate on Soviet heavy bomber strength which differed from that given in the testimony before your Subcommittee last April. You also called my attention to certain newspaper publicity which appeared recently with respect to this matter.

The facts are as follows.

The intelligence community is continually reviewing its current and projected estimates of Soviet strengths against the best evidence obtainable. Production difficulties, modifications of design, change in emphasis, and other factors, mean that actual production here, in the USSR and, in fact, anywhere, does not necessarily coincide with predictions.

The estimate of Soviet heavy bomber strength as of April 1, 1956, which was given in my testimony before your Subcommittee, was based largely on an estimated build up rate which rested upon earlier evidence.

Subsequent to my testimony before your Subcommittee in April 1956, the intelligence community acquired new and better evidence on Soviet heavy bomber production and strength in operational units and we undertook a complete review of our estimates on this subject. Our revised estimate was not completed until after the conclusion of hearings before your Subcommittee and after the adjournment of the Congress. It was based on new evidence and not on any extraneous considerations. This new agreed National Estimate revised downward the estimated total production of BOMBS as of July 1, 1956, but did not change the estimated number of

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